O. B. Frothingham - rec'd apr 13

Samuel May Jr.

21 Cornhill

Boston

Mass

Ms. B.1.6 v.6, 19

Solid

New York, April 11, 1864

My dear Sir, Your note inviting me to speak at the approaching anniversary in New York was received yesterday. The invitation is so gratifying and the language that conveys it is so kind, that it is hard for me to decline. which nevertheless I feel constrained to do, upon fully matured deliberating. One of these deliberating touches your platform. There are those who complain that it is too narrow in principle. My complaint is rather that it is too broad in policy; that it is open to all comers without reference to

their Mental or moral Competency
to discuss a Matter so grave - A
few picked Speakers, bringing carefully
prepared Articles on the special as-
pect of the Slavery Question, might
make an interesting and profitable
occasion, attracting the notice and
influencing the mind of the Com-
munity. But a morning Crowd
of speakers for the most part des-
titute of historical knowledge - philos-
ophical thought - practical sagacity
and moral perspective - speakers who
are pledged to a theory - and can form
the nature of the case, do little
else than repeat Year after Year
the same General truths with the

same special application does not seem to me obliging. The Bank in such hands loses much of its Monarchy: and the Convention are deprived of their edge. The public ear fatigued by incessant repetition of the same language ceases to listen. Unless it can have broader and deeper discussion. However one may appreciate and honor the truth, the firmness & devotion of your advocates. I find myself dissenting from so many of them in their judgment of principles, ideas, and above all of men and measures, that I do not feel called on. Nay, I do not feel at liberty to stand among them and be identified with them in the

regards of the community. And as the principles can be introduced now either in my presence on your platform or in my absence from it. I feel that, under the circumstances I do myself more justice by not speaking. — But I beg leave, indeed if any ability to stand up with your great speakers and contribute something to the dignity and wisdom of the meeting, this objection of mine would lose something of its force. Having no such power, I only succeed in putting myself to some degree in an uncomfortable and false position without gaining the satisfaction of doing good to the cause

MS. B. L. 6 v. 8, p. 19

I must add, however - that the grounds upon which I decline to speak at your anniversary - go somewhat deeper than the actual character of your Convention as I have observed them -

I have my grave doubts whether such Conventions any longer occupy the place they once did as useful instrumentalities in promoting the Cause of Freedom - The Slavery question is now fairly before the public - It has become the question of the day - It is debated with perfect openness - fullness and force in Newspapers and Magazines - in New York and in Washington - It has secured a place in the

Lecture soon – Mr Phillips is able now to advance his most radical views, in Plymouth Church and the Cooper Institute – before thousands of people – This being the case, I cannot feel the interest I once felt in the Anti Slavery meetings where four or five hundred conformed Abolitionists sit for hours listening to the eloquence of their own orators – and strengthening a faith already sufficiently confirmed – That the Anti-Slavery Society has done a work of immense importance I cordially and gratefully admit – But it does seem to me that its mechanism is

to a considerable extent superseded by new organs — and that henceforth the cause it has so manfully and ably defended may be safely entrusted to the larger agencies already in active operation. Not that the prophets are fallen yet into disuse By no means but they are distributed instead of being banded in a company — and must bear their "burden" Each in his own way and place —

Such, my dear Sir, are my honest thanks for declining to speak on your platform. I am not conscious of being under the influence of any others; nor can I explain, in any other way, the fact that I am not moved to do as I have done

in Glass Past - My abhorrence of Slavery Continues unabated; nay, if anything, it is increased - My respect for your prominent Champions - rises rather than declines - I am not ashamed of your Gospel. Only my desire is to adopt the most effectual way of spreading it and living it - Shall insensibly altered with the changing circumstances of the times. "

Very Truly Yours.

O. B. Frothingham

MS. B. I. 6 v. 8. p. 19